United Nations S/2006/610

Security Council

Distr.: General
3 August 2006

Original: English

Letter dated 3 August 2006 from the Permanent Representative of Ghana to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General

I have the honour to inform you that under Ghana's presidency of the Security Council, an open debate on "Peace consolidation in West Africa" will be held in the Council on Wednesday, 9 August 2006.

In this regard, Ghana has prepared the attached concept paper (see annex) in order to help guide the deliberations on that occasion.

I should, therefore, be most grateful if you would have the present letter and its annex circulated as a document of the Security Council.

(*Signed*) Nana **Effah-Apenteng**
Ambassador
Permanent Representative

06-45498 (E) 030806

Annex to the letter dated 3 August 2006 from the Permanent Representative of Ghana to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General

Concept paper on peace consolidation in West Africa

Background

The political instability that afflicted West Africa as a result of the eruption of violent internal conflicts in Liberia (1989), Sierra Leone (1991), Guinea-Bissau (1998) and Côte d'Ivoire (2002), which were laden with serious regional implications, has for the most part subsided, creating a unique opportunity for nation building and the promotion of sustainable development.

2. According to the UN Economic Commission for Africa, more than two million people are believed to have died in these conflicts, in addition to the widespread displacement of people, the extensive damage to property and infrastructure and the illegal exploitation of natural resources to finance destructive wars. Invariably, the victims of the conflicts were predominantly civilians, with women and children bearing the brunt of the suffering. The physical and psychological scars caused by these conflicts are yet to heal fully.

3. Although Sierra Leone, Guinea-Bissau and Liberia have successfully undergone a transition from war to constitutional rule and Côte d'Ivoire is currently implementing a "road map" towards the same, the security situation, as has been aptly described by the Secretary-General in his recent reports on these countries, remains "stable but fragile".

4. Those West African countries that have enjoyed relative calm and stability also face threats of their own. While they have made significant progress towards consolidating democratic governance and economic reform, they are constrained by, inter alia, institutional weaknesses, slow economic recovery, low inflows of foreign direct investment, debts and skills deficiencies. The mass cross border refugee flows resulting from the years of regional instability, while ebbing, is a potential threat to security and economic stability. Consequently, the region remains vulnerable to further destabilization, unless the underlying issues that constitute a threat to peace and stability are effectively addressed. Towards a Comprehensive Coordinated Strategy for Peace: ECOWAS/Security Council.

5. It should be noted that over the years both the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) and the Security Council have been actively engaged with addressing the question of peace and security in West Africa, both through separate initiatives and collaboratively.

6. Faced with the challenge of regional chaos, ECOWAS had to embark on a systemic search for conflict prevention and conflict management mechanisms at the risk of subjugating its primary economic focus to the military agenda. The adoption of the

ECOWAS Protocol Relating to the Mechanism for Conflict Prevention, Management, Resolution, Peacekeeping and Security (1999) and the creation of the ECOWAS Ceasefire Monitoring Group (ECOMOG) in the 1990s to intervene in Liberia and Sierra Leone were concrete examples of measures dictated by circumstances at the time. In Côte d'Ivoire, ECOWAS intervened in late 2002, laying the groundwork for the UN to take leadership of a peacekeeping operation there in 2003.

7. ECOWAS has since been progressively improving its mechanisms for dealing with conflicts and promoting peacebuilding by using a variety of tools, including making use of the good offices of the Heads of State and Government, collaboration among the heads of the armed forces of member states, traditional institutions, such as the Council of Elders and civil society.

8. In its efforts to contain violent conflicts and avert new conflagration within the framework and spirit of Chapters VI, VII and VIII of the UN Charter, ECOWAS has developed mutually-beneficial and complementary partnership with the African Union (AU) and the United Nations system. All peace agreements relating to the conflicts in West Africa have been negotiated under the co-ordinated and collaborative umbrella of ECOWAS, AU, UN and often the European Union (EU). Indeed, in Liberia, Sierra Leone and Côte d'Ivoire, UN peacekeeping missions have effectively operated as progressive extensions of ECOMOG missions under this 'formula for success'.

9. In view of the financial and technical constraints confronting countries in the region, the cardinal issue of Demobilization, Disarmament and Reintegration (DDR), as well as capacity-building and post-conflict elections, have often been organized under the auspices of ECOWAS in collaboration with the UN.

10. It is expected that the serious integration efforts ECOWAS has embarked upon, such as the monetary union and protocols on free movement and community citizenship, will buttress peace. Its Protocol on Democracy and Good Governance has outlawed unconstitutional change of government and is meant to ensure good governance and stability. It has adopted a Convention on Small Arms and Light Weapons, Their Ammunition and Other Related Materials and taken practical steps in the fight against gender inequality, youth unemployment, money laundering and terrorism through the creation of dedicated centres across the region.

11. On its part, the Security Council, as far back as 1997, requested the Secretary-General to submit a report on "The Causes of Conflict and the Promotion of Durable Peace and Sustainable Development in Africa". The fundamental conclusion of the report was that "The prevention of conflict begins and ends with the promotion of human security and human development. Ensuring human security is, in the broadest sense, the cardinal mission of the United Nations. Genuine and lasting prevention is the means to achieve that mission". This was reinforced subsequently in the 2004 report of The High-level Panel on Threats,

Challenges and Change, which was established by the UN Secretary-General to examine and make recommendations on our collective security system.

12. West Africa naturally benefited from this initiative when the Council in March 2002 established the Ad Hoc Working Group on Conflict Prevention and Resolution in Africa to propose, inter alia, recommendations on the enhancement of co-operation between the Security Council and the Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC) as well as with other UN agencies dealing with Africa. Additionally, it was to examine regional and cross-conflict issues that affect the Council's work on the prevention and resolution of conflict in Africa and to recommend how to enhance cooperation between the United Nations and regional organizations in that regard.

13. Significantly, the Council pushed for an Inter-Agency Mission of the UN to visit West Africa in October 2000, following which it undertook its own mission to the region in June 2004. It later endorsed the establishment of the United Nations Office for West Africa (UNOWA) with the objective of enhancing the contribution of the UN towards the achievement of peace and security priorities in the region. In March 2004 and February 2005, the Security Council held an open meeting on "Cross-border issues in West Africa", to highlight the problems of the illicit trade and proliferation of Small Arms and Light Weapons, mercenaries, refugees, etc. as an important dimension of regional instability which must be resolved.

14. Gradually, as democracy continues to take hold in many West African states, there has been an improvement in peace and stability. This trend will continue as more states in the region resort to democratic rule. In view of this positive development, West Africa is on the verge of attaining general peace for the first time in a generation.

Open Debate

15. It is against this backdrop that the Open Debate is being held at the Ministerial level to afford members of the Security Council and the wider membership of the United Nations, the opportunity to articulate their views and propose concrete and realistic recommendations to enable the Security Council formulate definitive measures spanning the peace consolidation spectrum of conflict prevention, peacekeeping and peacebuilding.

16. The debate will be chaired by Honourable Nana Addo Dankwa Akufo-Addo (MP), Minister for Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Ghana.

17. Among the broad cross-cutting themes relating to peace consolidation likely to be addressed during the debate, the outcome of which should provide an important contribution to the work of the newly established Peacebuilding Commission (PBC), are the following:

(i) How do we manage conflicts to prevent further escalation and achieve expedited resolution?

(ii) What measures should be taken to prevent the outbreak of new conflicts?

(iii) Given that several peace agreements have collapsed within five years, how do we prevent the relapse into conflict of countries emerging from conflict?

(iv) How can we promote human security and economic development in order to sustain peace in the region?

(v) the development of a more complementary relationship between ECOWAS/AU/UN and other regional organizations.

18. In dealing with these themes, it is expected that the following cardinal issues pertaining to peace consolidation may be considered:

(i) strengthening of national institutional capacity - security sector reform, judicial reform, strengthening public institutions;

(ii) good governance - checking corruption, promoting democracy, human rights and the rule of law, conduct of free and fair elections, and the implementation of the African Peer Review Mechanism (APRM);

(iii) the promotion of health and education;

(iv) justice and reconciliation - the use of truth and reconciliation commissions;

(v) transparent and accountable management of the economy and natural resources, including the establishment of fiscal and expenditure oversight bodies;

(vi) mechanisms for preventing and managing conflicts: early warning systems, using the good offices of the UN Secretary-General, the Security Council, eminent persons, traditional authorities, sanctions, civil society and NGOs;

(vii) peacekeeping;

(viii) DDR, including tailoring programmes to meet the needs of Special Groups like female ex-combatants, child soldiers and the disabled;

(ix) resettlement of internally displaced persons (IDPs) and refugees;

(x) the need for an overall country strategy framework to deal with post-conflict recovery and reconstruction;

(xi) the mobilization of resources and the role of the international community, and the establishment of monitoring and evaluation systems to assess the performance of both local and external actors;

(xii) the key policy tension in the post-conflict period appears to be between economic efficiency and political stability. Coordination in the post-conflict reconstruction system is crucial to ensure coherence;

(xiii) as some intra-state conflicts in West Africa can be interlinked with other regional conflicts, it may be necessary to deal with cross-border issues like the presence of mercenaries, smuggling, customs problems and control of small arms and light weapons;

(xiv) strengthening international cooperation between the UN/ECOWAS/AU and other regional organizations, bearing in mind the decision of the world leaders at the 2005 Summit to support the development and implementation of a ten-year plan for African capacity-building in peacekeeping;

(xv) What should be the role of the PBC, and how does the PBC cooperate with the Security Council?